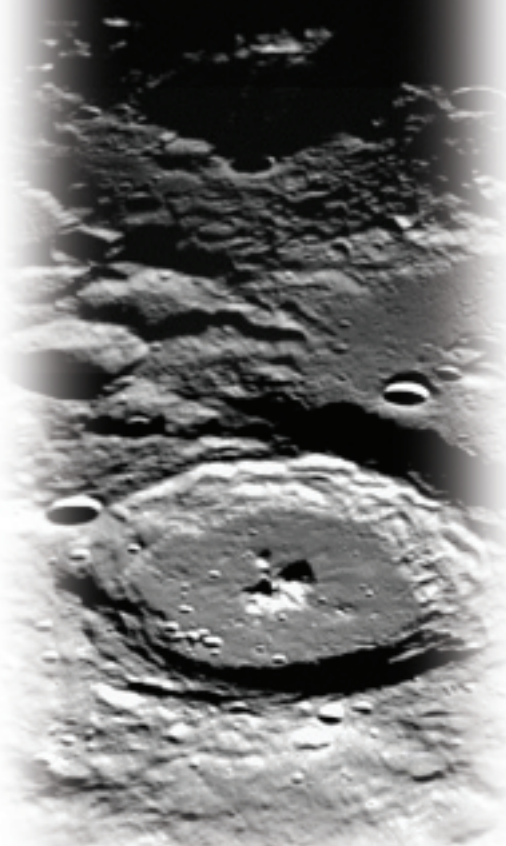




## **Building Trust in the Workplace:** *The Key to Creating a Future of Excellence*

Presented by **Ann Hibbard**  
Atlantic Management Center, Inc.

In partnership with **EDIN Associates**



Ann Hibbard  
Atlantic Management Center, Inc.  
6066 Leesburg Pike, Suite 700  
Falls Church, VA 22043  
703-245-2466

*[ann@annhibbard.com](mailto:ann@annhibbard.com) • [www.annhibbard.com](http://www.annhibbard.com) • [www.amciweb.com](http://www.amciweb.com)*

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# Building Trust in Workplace Relationships

Ann Hibbard

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What is the difference between an acquaintance and a friend at work? As I interview people in various industries and at various levels of the organization, I hear a recurring theme: trust. Trust is foundational to the customer-provider relationship, the supervisor-employee relationship, the peer relationship, and the mentor-protégé relationship. A trusting relationship encourages generosity and cooperation, enabling everyone to work more creatively, more effectively, and with greater enthusiasm.

How can you build trust in your work relationships? Here are five keys:

**T**ruthfulness. Truthfulness means honesty in your communications. It also means integrity in your character. The test of character comes when being truthful endangers what you want.

**R**eliability. Can others count on you to follow through and do what you say you will do? Do you behave consistently from one situation to the next? Reliability builds credibility.

**U**nderstanding. People achieve understanding only through listening attentively to one another and communicating openly and caringly. Particularly when people are going through transitions, with the accompanying uncertainty, stress, and anxiety, there can never be too much communication. Caring, two-way communication opens the door to understanding. You can only trust when understanding is present.

**S**upport. Support is understanding with hands and feet. You demonstrate your concern by doing what you can to help. Support can take many forms, from standing up for someone, to helping out with their project when they are overburdened, to giving them an extra measure of grace when they're going through a hard time.\*

**T**ime. Trust is built over time. It does not happen instantaneously. It also requires taking *time-out*. You need to set aside that urgent project and take a walk with your colleague to work out a sticky issue. You can meet for lunch to catch up; it's healthier than eating at your desk!

Unfortunately, no one is completely trustworthy. Everyone slips up in each of these aspects of trust at one time or another. Some are great at truthfulness and reliability, but fall down in understanding and support. Others are very understanding but may not be 100% honest. Over time, you learn in what ways a person is trustworthy and in what ways they are not.

The important thing is to start with **you**. Don't yield to the temptation of evaluating others with this list of qualities. Assess yourself. Ask those who know you well how you rate in each of these five areas. (Encourage brutal honesty. Get as much information from them as they will give. Then thank them for helping you.)

Only as you become aware of yourself, weaknesses and all, can you begin to make positive changes. Develop in yourself truthfulness, reliability, understanding, supportiveness, and time invested in relationships, and you will reap the rewards of trust.

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# Trust Inventory

Ann Hibbard

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## Truthfulness

1. When am I afraid to tell the truth? Why?
2. Am I breaking a confidence by telling the truth? (How can I tell the truth without breaking confidence?)
3. What assumptions shape the truth as I see it? (How much of this might I be making up?)
4. Are my actions aligned with my values and beliefs?

## Reliability

1. Do I deliver more than I promise or promise more than I deliver?
2. What percentage of the time am I early or on time to meetings and appointments? What is my percentage rate in returning telephone calls and e-mails?
3. Am I consistent in my reactions from one day to the next, or do my moods cause me to react to others in an unpredictable fashion?

## Understanding

1. Do I make it easy for others to tell the truth? (How do I punish them when they tell me things I don't want to hear?)
2. When listening, am I entering into the other's experience or am I formulating my response?
3. Do I ask non-judgmental questions to help the other explore the facts and their emotions concerning their situation?
4. Is my first concern to understand the other's point of view rather than getting them to understand my point of view?

## Support

1. How do I demonstrate support for those around me?
2. When someone's name comes up in conversation, do my comments support or undermine this person?
3. Am I aware of people who need extra support because of personal crises? What kind of support is appropriate and beneficial?

## Time

1. Am I using break times and lunch times to have meaningful, powerful conversations with a variety of people in my organization?
2. When there is a problem or conflict, do I take time out to deal with it in a direct conversation with the other person?
3. Do I allot a portion of my day for relationship building, or am I focused exclusively on the tasks at hand?

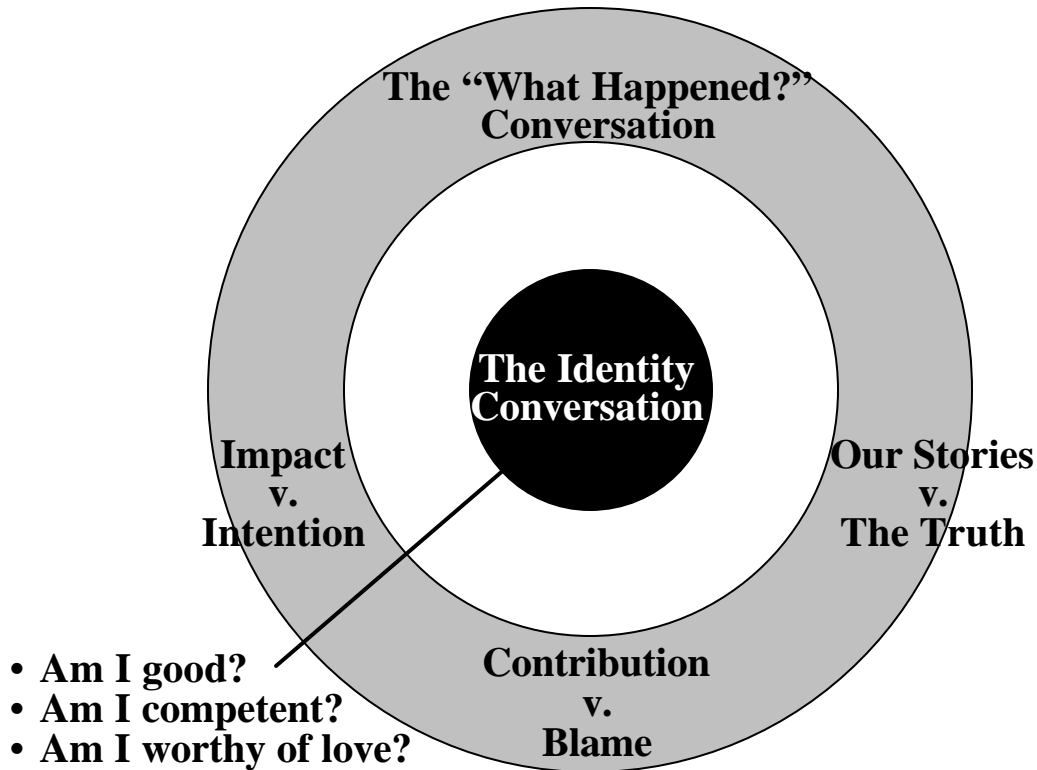
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## The Three Conversations Target

Ann Hibbard

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# The Three Conversations



Ann Hibbard

**Atlantic Management Center, Inc.**  
6066 Leesburg Pike Suite 700 • Falls Church VA 22041 • [www.amciweb.com](http://www.amciweb.com)  
703 256 0509 • fax 703 256 7052

Feelings	Identity Issues
<p>What feelings underlie my attributions and judgments?</p>	<p>How does what happened threaten my identity?</p>

From *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*, Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen of the Harvard Negotiation Project, Penguin Books, 1999.